

we do as a country is going to depend on how well we train our young people. And it starts early. So we're at a terrific early childhood education program here at the community college, where people who are interested in training very young children are getting the skills that they need. But we've also got a couple of teachers: one in fourth grade, one in ninth grade.

And so one of the concerns that I've had over the course of the last several months—in fact, the last couple of years—are the layoffs that we've seen in education and the cutbacks we've seen in education all across the country. States and local governments are under a big crunch. And at precisely the time when we need to be emphasizing education and putting our resources into education, we're seeing cutbacks all across the board. Teachers are losing their jobs. Schools are having to cut back on vital programs that are helping young people.

And the “American Jobs Act,” the bill that I put before Congress, would help to curb some of those trends. What we do is to provide \$30 billion to make sure that we've got teachers back in the classrooms, to make sure that we're not seeing additional teacher layoffs, that wonderful programs such as the ones that are taking place here are properly and adequately funded, and to make sure that, at the same time, we're also rebuilding some of the schools

around the country that are in a bad state of repair and where young people aren't getting the kind of support that they need in order to achieve.

So I'm going to spend a little time having a conversation here with the teachers and soon-to-be teachers. They're going to talk about their experiences, what's working, what they're excited about, but also the concerns that they've seen in terms of cutbacks in education.

And I hope that Members of Congress are going to be doing a little bit of listening to teachers and educators. We have a tendency to say great things about how important education is in the abstract, but we don't always put our money where our mouth is. And it's absolutely critical right now to make sure that we don't see the kinds of cutbacks that we've been seeing. If that becomes a long-term trend, we're going to fall behind countries like China, Korea, Germany, that are continually making significant investments in teachers.

So I want to thank all of you guys for taking the time to join me. I very much appreciate what you're doing.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. in the Children's Center at Guilford Technical Community College. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Guilford Technical Community College in Jamestown October 18, 2011

The President. Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Hello, Jamestown! It is great to be here in North Carolina. Great to be here at the Ragsdale YMCA.

I want to first of all thank Linda for the outstanding introduction. Give her a big round of applause. I want to also acknowledge your Congressman, Mel Watt, in the house. Mel is doing an outstanding job each and every day. I also want to acknowledge your mayor, Keith Volz, for the fine work that he's doing. He invited me back down here. He said there are some pretty good golf courses down here and

some fine restaurants, so I'm going to have to sample both the next time I'm here.

I had a chance to talk to Linda and a group of other teachers before I came out here. And I just want to say thank you to her, not only for the introduction, but also for teaching. I got a chance to learn about the extraordinary work that Guilford Technical Community College is doing to train new teachers and place them in schools where kids need them the most. And one of the best ways to make a difference in the life of our Nation is to make a difference in the life of every child. So I want to thank all the teachers who are in the audience for answering

the call, because you are making our Nation stronger.

Now, you may have heard we're taking a little road trip this week. It's a chance to get out of Washington. [Laughter] I must admit I'm traveling not in the usual RV. The bus we got parked outside is—Secret Service did a full going over, so it's decked out pretty good. [Laughter] But it's a wonderful opportunity to get out of Washington and hit the road. We stopped for a little North Carolina barbecue and sweet tea along the way. We—some hush puppies. Don't tell Michelle exactly what was on the menu. [Laughter]

But the main reason we're out here, in addition to seeing the extraordinary views and meeting the wonderful people—there's just something about North Carolina. People are just gracious and kind. Even the folks who don't vote for me are nice to me. [Laughter] And I—that's just a—that's a nice thing about this State.

The most important thing I wanted to do was to hear from people like you, because it doesn't seem like your voices are being heard in Washington right now. Times are tough for a lot of Americans. And here in North Carolina, there are a lot of folks who have been spending months looking for work and still haven't found it yet. A lot of people are doing their best just to get by. Maybe they've been able to keep their job, but hours have been cut back or some of their pay and benefits have been rolled back; people who are deciding, you know what, we can't afford taking that night out with the family because we've got to save on gas or we've got to make the mortgage or we've got to postpone our retirement to make sure that our child can go to college.

It's tough. It's hard. And I think most Americans know that our economic problems weren't caused overnight, so they recognize they won't be solved overnight. Even before the most recent economic crisis—[applause]—a lot of these challenges took a decade to build up, in some cases longer than a decade. Before the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, wages and incomes had been flat for the vast majority of Americans for a decade. So

people were struggling even before the crisis hit.

What that means is it's going to take time for us to rebuild an America where hard work and responsibility are rewarded. It will take time to rebuild an America where we restore security and opportunity for folks who are in the middle class or trying to get into the middle class. It's going to take time to rebuild an economy that's built to last and built to compete, an economy that works for everybody, not just for folks at the top.

Rebuilding this America where everybody has got a fair shake and everybody gives their fair share, an economy where you know if you do the right thing and you're looking after your family and you're working hard and you educate yourself and you're educating your kids and you're contributing back to the community, that you know that you will be able to enjoy that piece of the American Dream—restoring that economy will take some time. But we are going to get it done, Jamestown. We are going to keep fighting, and we're going to keep working to put people back to work, to help middle class Americans get ahead and to give our economy the jolt that it needs.

There are things we can do right now to help our economy. And that's why I sent Congress the "American Jobs Act." Now, this is a jobs bill with proposals of the sort that in the past have been supported by Democrats and Republicans. It's paid for by asking our wealthiest citizens, folks who make more than a million dollars a year, to pay their fair share. Independent economists have said this jobs bill would create nearly 2 million jobs. That's not my opinion, that's not the opinion of people who work for me. The people who study the economy for a living are telling us that this jobs bill would put people back to work right away and grow our economy at a time when the recovery has weakened.

But some folks in Washington don't seem to be listening. They don't seem to be listening. Just last week, all the Republicans in the Senate got together and blocked this jobs bill. They refused to even debate it. Now, keep in mind, one poll found that 63 percent of

Americans support the ideas in this jobs bill, but a hundred percent of Republicans in the Senate voted against it. So the majority of the American people think it makes sense for us to put teachers back in the classroom and construction workers back to work and tax breaks for small businesses and tax breaks for folks who are hiring veterans, but we got a hundred percent “no” from Republicans in the Senate.

Now, that doesn’t make any sense. Some people asked me yesterday why I was visiting Republican areas of North Carolina. I said, well, first of all, it’s because I just like North Carolina. *[Laughter]* Second of all, I’m not the Democratic President or the Republican President, I’m the President. And third of all, I don’t care if you’re a Republican or a Democrat, because we’re all Americans, and we are in this together. We don’t need a Republican jobs act or a Democratic jobs act, we need a jobs act. We need to put people back to work right now.

As I said, the ideas we put forward are ideas that in the past have been supported by Democrats and Republicans. So the question is, what makes it different this time, other than that I proposed it?

Now, let me try to be fair. The Republicans did put out their own jobs bill. They called it the “Real American Jobs Act.” *[Laughter]* So they don’t get points for originality—*[laughter]*—but they put out the plan. And I said, okay, let’s see what you got, because I want—nobody has a bigger interest than me in seeing Democrats and Republicans cooperate to get some stuff done. All right? I want that to happen.

So I said, let’s see what you got. And here’s what the plan boils down to: We’re going to gut environmental regulations, we’re going to drill more, we’re going to roll back Wall Street reform, and we’re going to repeal health care reform. Now, that’s a plan, but it’s not a jobs plan. And if you’re wondering, I mean, we can just do a little bit of comparison shopping right now. We’ll lift the hood and kick the tires and see our plan and their plan.

The Republican plan says that what’s standing between us and full employment is that

we’re preventing companies from polluting our air and our water too much. We, on the other hand, have said that—let’s put teachers back in the classroom here in North Carolina and all across the country who’ve been laid off because budgets have been tight at the State or local level. Let’s put construction workers back to work rebuilding roads and bridges and schools all across North Carolina and all across the country. And let’s put veterans back on the job. All right, so those are two choices.

Their plan says we’ll be better off if we deny 30 million Americans affordable health care choices and kick young people off their parents’ health insurance plans. Our plan says we’re better off if we give virtually every small business and worker in America a tax cut so that they’ve got more money in their pockets to hire more workers and to spend more at those wonderful restaurants that the mayor talked about.

Their plan says we need to go back to the good old days before the financial crisis when Wall Street wrote its own rules. Our plan says we need to make it easier for small businesses on Main Street to grow and to hire and to push the economy forward.

Now—so there’s a contrast in approaches here. But here’s the kicker. Remember that group of economists who said our jobs plan would create jobs? Well, one of those same economists took a look at the Republican plan and said that it could actually cost us jobs, that it wouldn’t do much to help the economy right now when folks are hurting so bad.

So I—look, we can have an argument about how much regulation we should have. We can have an argument, if you want, about health care. I think we did the right thing. But don’t pretend—*[applause]*—but you can’t pretend that creating dirtier air and water for our kids and fewer people on health care and less accountability on Wall Street is a jobs plan.

I think more teachers in the classroom is a jobs plan, more construction workers rebuilding our schools is a jobs plan, tax cuts for small-business owners and working families is a jobs plan.

That's the choice we face. And it's up to you to decide which plan is the real "American Jobs Act."

I want to emphasize, I want to work with Republicans on ways to create jobs right now. I'm open to any serious idea. Just last week, Congress passed, on a bipartisan basis, a trade agreement that will allow us to start selling more goods into Korea. Because we buy an awful lot of Hyundais and Kias; I want them to buy some Fords and Chevys and Chryslers. Wherever we have the possibility to work together to move this economy forward, I'm going to seize on that opportunity. That's the kind of progress on the economy we can keep on making. But to do so, we've got to focus less on trying to satisfy one wing of one party. We've got to focus more on doing what it takes to help the American people.

And that's why we're going to give folks in Congress another chance. *[Laughter]* They said no the first time, but we're going to give them another chance to listen to you, to step up to the plate and do the right thing. We are going to give them another chance to do their jobs and look out for your jobs.

And it may be that just the bill was too big the first time; there was just too much stuff, and they weren't clear about what the jobs act would do. It was confusing to them. So what we're going to do is we're going to break it up into separate pieces—*[laughter]*—and we're going to let them vote on each piece, one at a time. That way you can be crystal clear on where you stand on all the elements of the jobs bill.

The first vote that we asked Congress to take is scheduled for later this week. It's a vote that would put hundreds of thousands of police officers back on the beat, firefighters back on the job, and teachers like Linda back in the classroom where they belong. All right? So that's the first part.

All over the country, budget cuts are forcing schools to lay off teachers in startling numbers. Here in North Carolina, nearly 2,000 classroom positions have been eliminated for this school year. I visited a school in Millers Creek yesterday where they've had to increase class

sizes. There's almost no money for things like textbooks.

I can tell you, the last thing a superintendent wants to do is lose teachers. Your Governor has been fighting these education cuts. But it is unfair to our kids and it undermines our future not to invest in education.

I had the President of South Korea here, and they are hiring teachers in droves. He's importing teachers from other countries to teach their kids. Their attitude is, we want our kids learning English when they're in first grade. And we're laying off teachers here in North Carolina? We're not going to be able to compete. Our kids will fall behind.

One North Carolina teacher said: "We didn't cause the poor economy. If anything, we built the good parts." And that teacher is absolutely right. Our teachers build the good parts of our economy. It gives our children the skills they need to compete. It gives our children a future that is bright. We've got to invest in our education system. So our plan would mean about 13,000 education jobs right here in North Carolina alone. That's why I need you all to tell the Senate, let's put our teachers back to work.

All right, so that's part number one. Part number two: We're going to give Members of Congress a chance to vote on whether our construction workers should sit around doing nothing while China builds the newest airports and the fastest railroads. That doesn't seem to me like the American way. We used to always have the best stuff. Right? People from all around the world would come to America to see the Golden Gate Bridge and the Hoover Dam and Grand Central station and the interstate highways. We have dropped in terms of infrastructure in this country. We're no longer number one. And that's not how we built ourselves into a great economic superpower.

So Congress will have a chance to say whether unemployed Americans should continue to struggle or whether we are going to put them back to work making our schools state of the art, making sure that our roads and bridges aren't crumbling. They're going to have a chance to vote on whether or not we're

going to give people who are long-term unemployed a chance to get back on the job and reform our unemployment insurance system and build a better life. They're going to get a chance to take a stand on whether we should ask people like me to pay our fair share so that middle class families and small businesses can get a tax cut.

I want to—let me just say this. I'm going to make a point here about taxes, because there's been a lot of misinformation out there. I was watching the football game last night, and they had some ad that didn't really make much sense. *[Laughter]* So let me just be crystal clear just in case your friends or neighbors ask about this. What we have said is, in order to pay for the jobs plan and to close our deficit, we should ask the very wealthiest Americans, top 2 percent, to pay a little bit more. I can afford it. Warren Buffett, he can afford it. And the fact of the matter is, is that some of the wealthiest Americans pay a lower tax rate than middle class Americans.

Now—so the question is, are we going to set up a tax system that is fair, that helps us shrink the deficit, helps us to pay off our debts, and helps put people back to work? But I want to be clear: The vast majority of Americans would see a tax cut under this jobs bill. We've been cutting taxes. We haven't been raising taxes, we've been cutting taxes. And we can continue to keep taxes low for middle class and working families if we ask those at the very top to do their fair share. And a lot of them are willing to do it if they feel like it's going to make the country stronger and reduce our deficit and put people back to work.

So don't be bamboozled. *[Laughter]* Don't fall for this notion that somehow the jobs act is proposing to raise your taxes. It's just not true. Under this—here's what will happen. If we don't pass the "American Jobs Act," if we do not pass the provision in there that extends the payroll tax cut that we passed in December, most people here, your taxes will go up by a thousand dollars. So voting no against the jobs bill is voting in favor of middle class families' income taxes going up. And that's a fact. Don't take my word for it; all the reporters here, they

can check on the facts on this thing. That's the truth.

And I've got to emphasize this: When you talk to most people who've done well, who've been blessed by this country, they're patriots. They want to do the right thing. They're willing to do more. They want their money well spent; they want to make sure that it's not being wasted. That's why we cut a trillion dollars out of the Federal budget this summer. It's why I'm proposing to cut more to close the deficit. But people are willing to do a little bit more because everybody understands we are in this together. That's how America has always moved forward.

So look, here's the bottom line. Congress has a choice to make in the coming weeks. If they vote against the proposals I'm talking about, if they vote against taking steps that we know will put Americans back to work right now, they don't have to answer to me, they're going to have to answer to you. They're going to have to come down here to North Carolina and tell kids why they can't have their teachers back in the classroom. They're going to have to tell those construction workers, look them in the eye and say, you know what, sorry, we can't afford to rebuild those broken-down roads and those crumbling bridges. They're going to have to explain to working families why their taxes are going up while the richest Americans and the largest corporations keep on getting a sweet deal.

And that's where you come in. You are the ones who are going to be able to persuade them to think differently. We need your voices heard. I need you to give Congress a piece of your mind. Mel Watt's already doing fine, so you don't need to talk to Mel. He's on the program. But these Members of Congress, they work for you. And if they're not delivering, it's time you let them know. You've got to get on the phone or pay them a visit or write them a letter or tweet, whatever you do—*[laughter]*—and remind them to do the right thing.

Remind them of what's at stake here. Remind them that "no, we can't" is no way to face tough times. When a depression hit, we didn't say, "No, we can't." When World War II came,

we didn't say, "No, we can't." Our grandparents and great-grandparents, they didn't say: "Nothing we can do about this. Let's just spend all our time arguing in Washington." They didn't say, "It's too hard." They didn't say, "We give up." They said, "Let's roll up our sleeves, let's fight back." And America won. When the space race started, Kennedy didn't say, "We can't go to the Moon; that's too far." He said: "Come on, America. Let's go." America won. We can win the space race. When we confront tough times, we don't give in to what is, we think about what ought to be.

There are too many Americans who are hurting right now for us to just sit by and do nothing. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to say, "Yes, we can." We can create jobs. We can restore the middle class. We can reduce our deficits. We can build an economy that works for everybody. We are not a people who just sit around doing nothing when things

aren't right. We are Americans, and we stand up and we decide that the problem's going to be fixed. And that's the spirit we need to muster right now.

Let's meet this moment. Let's get to work. And let's remind everybody just why the United States of America is the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless North Carolina. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the Mary Perry Ragsdale Family YMCA. In his remarks, he referred to Jamestown, NC, teacher Linda Phillips; Gov. Beverly E. Perdue of North Carolina; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

Remarks at Greensville County High School in Emporia, Virginia October 18, 2011

The President. Hello! Thank you. Hello, Eagles! Well, it is good to be here. Thank you very much. It's great to be back in Virginia. It is great to be here at Greensville County High School.

I want to thank Jami Clements not only for the gracious introduction, but congratulate her on being selected as Greensville County Teacher of the Year. We're proud of everything that Jami has accomplished here at the school, but we also want to thank her for her service in our Armed Forces, and that is an extraordinary combination of service: teaching and serving. And I know that the students feel very lucky to have her in the classroom. And I like that she's teaching biology, because we need some scientists out there.

In addition, I want to acknowledge, first of all, the superintendent of schools, Philip Worrell. Give your superintendent a big round of applause. And I want to acknowledge the principal, Wayne Scott. And finally, I want to thank your mayor, Mr. Sam Adams, for being with us here today.

Now, some of you may have heard we're taking a little road trip at the beginning of this week. The RV is a little bigger than most. [Laughter] We've got it parked outside. But I decided it was time to get out of Washington and hit the open road. So we landed in Asheville, North Carolina—and that truly is God's country—and we drove through beautiful mountain roads and stopped for some barbecue and a little sweet tea. And we went to Boone County, North Carolina, and they had a general store there with big barrels of candy, and so we stocked up for Halloween. And don't tell Michelle—[laughter]—but we bought a lot of candy. [Laughter]

But most importantly, the reason that we have been traveling on the road is because I wanted to hear from folks like you. It doesn't seem like your voices are heard enough in Washington. They don't seem to be listening. So I figured if I brought the press here, then they could hear you.

Because times are tough for a lot of Americans. Here in Virginia, there are a lot of folks